

POSC 100/POSC 391  
INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT  
Summer (July 6-24), 2015  
ONLINE

Jason E. Whitehead, J.D., Ph.D.  
Associate Professor, Political Science Dept.  
Director, Legal Studies Program  
Campus Pre-Law Advisor

E-mail: Jason.Whitehead@csulb.edu

**Course Description and Goals.** This course presents a broad overview of the United States system of government. The course will be divided into *three major sections*. First, we will examine the *goals* of our political system, which can be found through a study of the history, structure, and values of the Constitution. These goals include things like: individual liberty, representative democracy, constitutionalism, and federalism. In the second section of the course, we will examine the *influences* on the political system, which help explain why the system works the way it does. These influences include things like family and society, mass media, and interest groups. The third section focuses on the *institutions and dynamics* of the political system, which consist of the practical ways in which public policy gets created. Here, we will discuss things like political parties, campaigns and elections, as well as Congress, the Presidency, and the Courts.

There are *two primary goals* of this course. My first goal is to provide you with a body of information and ideas about the political system in which we live. This body of information and ideas, which you will acquire through lectures, readings, and exams, can help you become an informed citizen and student of politics. My second goal, however, is more important: I want to encourage you to critically analyze the political system. People fight -- both literally and figuratively -- over the issues we will discuss in this class. ***Nations go to war over these issues. Individuals give their lives to create even small changes in the political process.*** These things happen because, despite what you might think, ***politics matters.*** In order to understand how it matters, you will need to consistently ask yourself questions like these: Out of all the many political systems in existence, why do we have the one we have? Does the system truly reflect the interests of the people it serves? If there are major defects with the political system, what can and should be done about it? I cannot force you to ask or answer these kinds of questions -- I can only show you why they might be important. The rest is up to you.

**Required Text:**

*American Government: Political Development and Institutional Change*, Seventh Edition, Cal

Jillson, Routledge, 2013.

**Assignments and Grading.** Your course grade will be based upon your performance on the following assignments:

- **Class Participation (25%).** You will be graded on the quality of your contributions either during live-stream lectures or on discussion boards (see instructions below for each). Barring any exceptional circumstances (see appendix), you must contribute to the discussion once every 24 hours, M-Th, in order to receive full credit. See further instructions below.
- **Mid-Term Exam (25%) – Wed., July 15.** This will be an on-line multiple-choice exam, consisting of 50 questions. See instructions on BeachBoard for “How to Take Midterm and Final Exams.”
- **Final Exam (25%) – Thur., July 23.** *For all students,* this will be a multiple-choice exam, consisting of 50 questions. *For POSC 391 students,* there will also be one essay question due the same day. See instructions on BeachBoard for “How to Take Midterm and Final Exams.”
- **Debate Analysis Paper (25%) – Due online Fri., July 24 (by 11: 59 PM PST).** See “Debate Analysis Paper Instructions and Rubric,” and “How to Submit Files to BeachBoard Dropbox,” posted on Beachboard.

### **General Course Requirements.**

*Course Structure.* This course is conducted entirely online, which means you do not have to be on campus to complete any portion of it. You will participate in course lectures, discussions, exams, and other activities using your computer. Here are some basic instructions for doing this:

- *See course homepage on BeachBoard for:*
  - Minimum system requirements;
  - Setting up audio;
  - “Getting Started” Guide;
  - Orientation videos; and
  - Detailed instructions for accessing lectures, participating in discussions.
- *Lectures* – You have two options for accessing the lectures -- you may choose either option on any given day, depending on what fits your schedule:
  - *First,* you may watch a live stream of the lecture on M-Th from 9:00 AM-12:00 PM PST.
  - *Second,* you may watch archived recordings of the lectures at any time

throughout the day or night. The lectures will not be available until sometime after the live stream has concluded at 12:00 PM PST each day, but you may access them any time after that.

- o *See Instructions on BeachBoard for "How to Access Our Online Lecture Room."*
- *Discussions* – Just as with the lectures, you have two options for earning discussion points:
  - o *First*, during the live lecture stream, you may provide: (A) at least **one short (1-2 sentence) response** to a question or issue I raise during the lecture, *or* (B) at least **one short (1-2 sentence) reply** to a response given by another student. These responses and replies will be given through text, audio, or video at my discretion, depending on the topic being discussed;
  - o *Second*, if you watched the recorded lecture, or if you watched the live lecture but did not participate in the discussion, you must post a **longer 1-paragraph written response** to a question on a discussion board by 12:00 PM PST the day after the recorded lecture becomes available.
  - o *See BeachBoard for "Discussion Instructions and Rubric," and "How to Post in BeachBoard Discussions."*

*Problems.* Come and see me as soon as possible if you are having problems understanding, keeping up, or if there is any reason you cannot be effectively engaged in the course. I will not provide any accommodations for these issues at the last minute, but if you e-mail me in advance, we can almost always work something out.

*E-mail Availability.* I will make every reasonable effort to help you understand the material better outside of class. However, due to the concentrated nature of a 3-week summer course, my opportunities to do so are limited. The best way to reach me is almost always through e-mail (address noted at beginning of syllabus). I enjoy discussing these issues with you via e-mail, and I encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity.

I will make every effort to reply to class-related e-mails within 24 hours, EXCEPT on weekends. I generally have a huge number of e-mails to answer immediately before exams and before the paper deadline. Thus, I cannot guarantee a timely reply within 24 hours of these events. So, it is in your interest to start studying and working on your papers early so that you can take maximum advantage of my advice and help.

*Grade-Related Communication –24-hour Cooling-off Period.* I am always happy to review your discussion responses, exams and papers with you in order to help you improve for the future.

However, if you are unhappy or dissatisfied with your grade, you must wait for at least 24 hours before e-mailing or talking to me in person. The reason for this delay is to allow you time to re-read the response, exam, or paper, re-read and understand the relevant readings, and to otherwise consider your performance in a deliberate, thoughtful way.

After 24 hours have gone by, if you have questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me. Always remember, this is not a game or a competition – it is a learning process. Grades are designed to help you learn the material. If your focus is only on getting a better grade, you are missing the point. I am committed to helping you grow and develop as thinkers and writers, but that will only happen if you approach class the same way.

*Specific course policies* regarding paper submission, exceptions, makeups, late assignments, cheating and plagiarism, students with disabilities and course withdrawal can be seen in the *appendix* at the end of this syllabus.

### ***Course Outline, Schedule, and Reading Assignments***

#### **WEEK ONE – July 6 -July 9**

- I. **Goals of the American Political System**  
***Big Debate #1: Republic vs. Democracy***
  - A. **Ancient and Modern Political Ideas**  
Chapter 1, pp. 1-14
  - B. **American History**  
Chapter 1, pp. 14-23  
Chapter 2, pp. 26-45 and 49-56  
Appendix A, pp. 540-42 (Declaration of Independence)
  - C. **Federal and State Constitutions**  
Chapter 2, pp. 45-49  
Chapter 13, pp. 406-20  
Chapter 14, pp. 443-46  
Appendix D, pp. 561-67 (Federalist #10 and #51)  
Appendix C, pp. 549-60 (U.S. Constitution)
  - D. **National/State Relations (“Federalism”)**  
Chapter 3, pp. 60-88

#### **WEEK TWO (Part A) – July 13-14:**

- II. **Influences on the Political System**  
***Big Debate #2: Objectivity vs. Social Conditioning***

- A. **The Formation and Analysis of Political Ideas**  
Chapter 4, pp. 90-118  
Ideology Survey (link on BeachBoard)
  - B. **Mass Media**  
Chapter 5, pp. 120-51
  - C. **Interest Groups and Social Movements**  
Chapter 6, pp. 155-87  
Chapter 14, pp. 437-65
- 

Wed., July 15: **Mid-Term Exam**  
*Note: There will still be normal lecture and discussion on this day!*

---

**WEEK TWO (Part B) – July 15-16:**

- III. **Political Institutions and Dynamics**  
*Big Debate #3: Decisiveness vs. Moderation*
  - A. **Political Parties**  
Chapter 7, pp. 189-224
  - B. **Voting, Campaigns, and Elections**  
Chapter 8, pp. 226-63

**WEEK THREE – July 20-23:**

- C. **Legislative Power**  
Chapter 9, pp. 265-99
  - D. **Executive Power**  
Chapter 10, pp. 301-88
  - E. **Bureaucratic Power**  
Chapter 11, pp. 340-68
  - F. **Judicial Power**  
Chapter 12, pp. 370-403
- 

Thur., July 23: **Final Exam**  
*Note: There will be a review session instead of a lecture on this day.*

Fri., July 24: **Debate Analysis Paper Due Online by 11:59 PM PST**

---

## Appendix: Miscellaneous Course Policies

***Paper Submissions.*** You must upload your paper to the appropriate electronic “dropbox” on BeachBoard in one of the following formats: .doc, .docx, .txt, or .pdf. *I will not accept papers submitted in any other way.* You must save a copy of the electronic notification you receive when you successfully upload your paper to BeachBoard. In the event of a discrepancy as to whether or when you submitted your paper, this electronic notification is the only proof I will accept. You must also keep an electronic or paper copy of your paper.

***Exceptions, Make-ups, and Late Assignments.*** Due Dates and times are firm! It is your responsibility to arrange your schedule around your academic responsibilities. In general, **exceptions will only be made for the following reasons, for which satisfactory documentation must be provided:** (1) Illness or injury to the student; (2) Death, injury, or serious illness of an immediate family member or the like; (3) Religious reasons (listed in California Education Code section 89320); (4) Jury duty or government obligation; or (5) University sanctioned or approved activities, such as artistic performances, forensics competitions, participation in research conferences, intercollegiate athletic activities, student government, required class field trips, etc.. **To be excused under #1 or 2, you must provide BOTH satisfactory documentation as soon as possible AND evidence of work completed on the assignment at the time of sickness or illness. To be excused under #s 3-5, however, you must provide me with satisfactory documentation at least 1 day prior to the exam or deadline.** If you have a legitimate excuse for missing an exam, I will arrange for an appropriate make-up exam. If you have a legitimate excuse for missing a paper, we will work out an appropriate alternative deadline AS LONG AS you can demonstrate that you have already completed an appropriate amount of work on the assignment.

***Grade Reduction for Late Assignments.*** In the event of an unexcused late paper or discussion board post, I will immediately mark it down by a third of a grade for being late on the day it is due. I will then mark it down another third of a grade for every 24-hour period in which it is late. For example, a paper due on Friday at 11:59 PM but not turned in until Sunday at 12:01 AM will be reduced by two-thirds of a grade – for example, a “B” paper would receive a “C+.” Make the most of the time you have to complete written assignments; no allowances will be made for last-minute problems with computers, networks, etc. unless you let me know as soon as you are able.

***Cheating and Plagiarism.*** It is my policy to deal with any form of cheating and/or plagiarism by immediately giving a failing grade on the assignment and reporting you to the department and other administrative authorities for other possible sanctions. If you are having problems with the course material, please come and see me before doing something that could put your academic career in jeopardy.

Please note that “plagiarism” includes any use of the ideas or work of others as if they were

one's own, without giving appropriate credit. That means that *failing to cite your sources* in a paper is more than just a technical glitch -- it is plagiarism and will be handled as such. See separate paper instructions for citation guidelines and please see me if you are having difficulty understanding what is required in this area.

***Students with Disabilities.*** I am completely committed to providing reasonable accommodations for any student with a verifiable physical or other disability. This may include alternative testing or note-taking arranged through Disabled Student Services. However, it is your responsibility to notify me in advance of the need for such an accommodation.

***University Withdrawal Policy.*** It is your responsibility to withdraw from class if you wish to do so. I have no obligation to withdraw registered students who stop attending or completing assignments. **The deadline to withdraw from a class without a "W" for this summer session is July 17, 2015.**

Withdrawal from a course after that date requires the signature of the instructor and the department chair, and is permissible only for serious and compelling reasons. For example, severe or extensive medical problems would be serious and compelling, but *fear of receiving a final grade lower than desired, or a change in one's work schedule would not be considered serious and compelling.* Generally, if withdrawal is allowed, a "W" will appear on your transcript.

DURING THE FINAL WEEK OF INSTRUCTION WITHDRAWALS ARE NOT PERMITTED EXCEPT IN CASES SUCH AS ACCIDENT OR SERIOUS ILLNESS WHERE THE CIRCUMSTANCES CAUSING THE WITHDRAWAL ARE CLEARLY BEYOND THE STUDENT'S CONTROL. THE CAUSE MUST BE DOCUMENTED. ORDINARILY, WITHDRAWALS IN THIS CATEGORY INVOLVE TOTAL WITHDRAWAL FROM THE UNIVERSITY. YOU WILL NEED THE APPROVAL OF THE COLLEGE DEAN AS WELL AS THAT OF THE CLASS INSTRUCTOR AND THE DEPARTMENT CHAIRPERSON FOR EACH CLASS.